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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR ISN/RA (RICHARD NEPHEW, JODY DANIEL) AND IO/T  
(HEATHER VON BEHREN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/28/2018  
TAGS: [PARM](#) [MUNC](#) [IAEA](#) [AM](#)  
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE DELIVERED FOR GC VOTE ON MESA GROUP SEAT  
IN IAEA

REF: STATE 99746

Classified By: DCM Joseph Pennington, reasons 1. 4 (b/d).

¶1. (S) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to MFA's Acting Head of UN Department Nouneh Zastoukhova requesting staunch GOAM opposition to Iran and Syria's candidacy to the IAEA Board of Governors, support for Afghanistan's nomination to the Board of Governors, and support for Kazakhstan's bid to join the MESA group. Poloff also explained US preference for a consensus approach in determining the candidate for the open MESA Group candidate that would compete for the open seat on the IAEA's Board of Governors.

¶2. (S) Zastoukhova had no immediate position on the demarche's requests, said the MFA would study them carefully, and promised to share the demarche contents with Armenia's Foreign Minister and diplomatic mission at the UN in New York. She did acknowledge, however, that Afghanistani diplomats had contacted the GOAM on the issue; that neither Iran nor Syria had; and that she foresaw no impediments to Armenia supporting Kazakhstan's bid for a seat on the MESA Group. Zastoukhova said it made perfect sense to her that Kazakhstan, by virtue of its stance on non-proliferation backed up by its history of relinquishing nuclear weapons voluntarily, and Armenia's good relations with the country, should make it a viable candidate for membership in the group. Zastoukhova took under advisement the preference for a consensus approach to nominating the Mesa Group's candidate for the IAEA Board of Governors, and said Armenia always favored such an approach.

¶3. (S) COMMENT: Given Armenia's long-standing and often-articulated need to have good-neighbor relations and the growing economic ties with Iran, it is relatively unlikely that Armenia will prove willing to anger Iran by publicly opposing its bid for the IAEA seat. Armenians see Iran as a potent regional power on their southern border, with which they are extremely hesitant to pick fights. Moreover, the Russia-Georgia crisis has brought back bad memories of Armenia's "cold, dark years" in the 1990s, when Iran constituted Armenia's sole trade route to the wider world, with the Turkish, Georgian, and Azerbaijani borders all closed to Armenia. Armenia sees the maintenance of cordial trade relations with Iran as a strategic imperative. Our bet is that Armenia will seek to avoid a prominent role in the debate over Iran and Syria's bids for the IAEA board, but will seek to maintain amicable relations with all parties to the debate.       END COMMENT.  
YOVANOVITCH